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VIRGIN ISLANDS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO RECEIVING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

WASHINGTON – A St. Thomas man pleaded guilty today in federal court in the District of the Virgin Islands to receiving child pornography via the Internet, Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Anthony J. Jenkins of the District of the Virgin Islands announced.

Bradley Douglas Highbarger, a/k/a “Douglas Jerome Stien,” 35, of St. Thomas was indicted on Feb.15, 2007, on two counts of receiving child pornography via the Internet. The charges were developed after Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, investigating crimes involving passport fraud and controlled substances, searched Highbarger’s home in July 2006. Using an additional search warrant, agents uncovered approximately 78 video clips and more than 30 images on Highbarger’s computer that depicted the sexual abuse of children. In his guilty plea, Highbarger admitted to using a file-sharing or peer-to-peer software program to receive an illegal video and a separate illegal image in July 2006. Peer-to-peer networks allow users connected to the Internet to link their computers with other computers around the world and share information and files.

Highbarger has been detained since his July 20, 2006, arrest. Under the plea agreement, Highbarger faces a minimum sentence of five years in prison and a maximum sentence of 20 years. He also faces a maximum fine of \$250,000 and up to a lifetime term of supervised release. He will also forfeit computer and electronic media used in his crimes.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorneys’ Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit <http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov/>.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Everard Potter of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of the Virgin Islands and Trial Attorney Elizabeth M. Yusi of the Criminal Division’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section. The case is being investigated by ICE, the Diplomatic Security Service of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

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